

## **The Sani-Cream Ice Cream Shop**

Bailey Cincotta  
Booth Elementary School, Enfield  
Teacher: Larry Hughes

On the last Saturday in February 1956, a new business opened in White County, Illinois. It was the Sani-Cream Ice Cream Shop. It was located on Oak Street in Carmi where the Southern Illinois Lumber Company is now located. The owners of the Sani-Cream were Dan and Annalee Lewis. Mr. Lewis was thirty-four years old, and Mrs. Lewis was thirty years old when they started their new business.

The Sani-Cream Ice Cream Shop was a popular place. It operated from 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. The Sani-Cream offered a variety of soft-serve ice cream flavors, including vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, butter pecan, and even pineapple. It also served milkshakes, malts, hot dogs, barbeque, and soft drinks. All of the ice cream toppings were homemade except for the chocolate. They received most of their supplies from another Sani-Cream shop outside of White County.

The prices then were definitely cheaper than they are now. A small ice cream cone was five cents, a medium cone was ten cents, a large cone was fifteen cents, and an extra-large cone was only twenty-five cents. The milkshakes and malt drinks were also just twenty-five cents. Sundaes were fifteen and twenty-five cents. The price of a hot dog was fifteen cents and the barbeque was twenty-five cents.

Even though it was not the only ice cream shop in town, the Sani-Cream managed to be a very popular hangout for teenagers. Their competition was the nationwide Dairy Queen. Mr. Lewis stated that a lot of the teenagers bought an ice cream item and simply

hung out in the parking lot. Sometimes they would even share some of the ice cream with their dogs.

One of the busiest times of the year for the Sani-Cream was the Corn Day Fall Festival for which most of the people in the county congregated to celebrate. Mr. Lewis recalled that one year the Corn Day parade was cancelled due to rain. “No lie, it was like the whole crowd from the parade had flocked to the Sani-Cream,” Mr. Lewis alleged. “They were all in the mood for some ice cream and soft drinks.”

Even though it was very time-consuming for both the Lewises, they especially enjoyed working with the public. At that time only four people worked at the Sani-Cream. They were the owners, of course, Dan and Annalee Lewis, Phyllis Stuby-Browning, and Ronnie Stuby. Phyllis was their first employee, and she still lives in Carmi today.

Like almost all businesses, Sani-Cream eventually closed. Mr. Lewis had no choice but to sell the Sani-Cream because his father needed his help with farming. On November 1, 1978, the Sani-Cream was sold to George and Mary Forth who continued the ice cream business. Only a few short months later, however, the Forths sold the shop to Harry Barbre. After he purchased the Sani-Cream, it did not remain an ice cream shop for long. Barbre turned it into a workshop, which subsequently burned down. Even though the Sani-Cream Ice Cream Shop is not physically with us anymore, its legacy will never be forgotten. [From “Spring Opening of the Sani-Cream,” *Carmi Times*, Feb. 25, 1956; student historian’s interview with Dan Lewis, Sept. 9, 2005; and student historian’s interview with Annalee Lewis, Sept. 9, 2005.]